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THE TEACHING OF VERGIL IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

To be a successful teacher of any subject one must have knowledge and personality; he must *know* something, he must *be* somebody. If one knows enough, if one is enough, and if, with knowledge enough and personality enough, he applies himself with single-minded devotion to the task of teaching as the one business of supreme importance, he stands some chance of doing what, according to old Trimalchio in Petronius's Latin novel, the teacher of a favorite slave of Trimalchio did: 'He taught the boy more than he knew himself'. A fine ideal this, surely, for every teacher to hold before himself.

Now, for the acquisition of a personality no formula has as yet been presented. Here, at least, I can be of no service whatever to anyone else. I am constrained, therefore, to confine myself to the question of knowledge.

What should the teacher of Vergil know? In seeking to answer this question the most I can hope to do is to make a new grouping of more or less familiar materials. I beg the reader to keep in mind the following wise words, written by Professor J. B. Greenough as part of the Preface to his edition of the Satires and the Epistles of Horace:

But the editor has derived so much advantage from editions of the Classics in which the notes reminded him in particular connections of things which in general he knew before, that he has not inquired so much whether a thing was likely to be known, as whether it was likely to be thought of in the connection.

What, then, in order to teach Vergil successfully in the Secondary Schools, should the teacher of Vergil know?

(1) He should know, first of all, Vergil himself. How?

(a) By long, loving and intimate study of *all* Vergil's works. What manner of man, for instance, was Vergil? Vergil is like Homer, unlike Horace, in that he tells us little directly of himself. In the main, then, we must gain our understanding of Vergil's character and personality through inferences which we draw from the character and the contents of his writings. Fortunately for us, in some instances we can reinforce these inferences by appeals to ancient testimony concerning Vergil (see below, under b).

One impression of Vergil gained by every careful reader of his works is that Vergil was an untiring student and a profound scholar. He had, manifestly, an extraordinary knowledge of the whole range of Greek literature and of the earlier literature of his own country. He was profoundly versed also in the history of Rome, mythical and actual alike. Further, he had a complete mastery of Greek mythology and of Greek and Roman religion. Such accomplishments as these are won only by the severest work, the most careful study, carried on for long years. In perfect harmony with the impression of these matters we gain from reading Vergil's own writings is a tradition recorded by Suetonius (see below, under b) in his *Life of Vergil*. This declares that, when Vergil was writing his *Georgics*, it was his practice to dictate early in the morning as many verses as he could and then to spend the rest of the day working them over and over and reducing them to as small a number of verses as possible. Suetonius adds: <solitus Vergilius est dicere> non absurde carmen se ursae more parere . . . et lambendo effingere. Part of this tradition had already appeared in Quintilian (10.3.8): 'That Vergil wrote very few verses in a day Varus bears testimony'. Part of it appeared again, in fuller form, in the second century A.D., in Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* 17.10.2-7, as follows:

'According to the friends and the intimates of Vergil, in the accounts they have left of his nature and his character, Vergil was wont to say that he produced his verses as a bear gives birth to her cubs. The cubs are at first formless and shapeless: the mother bear licks them into fair form and shape. So, said Vergil, my verses at first are crude and imperfect, but by handling them and fondling them over and over I give to them at last fair features, decent lineaments'.

It is worth while to compare, in this connection, what Horace, that other great poet of the Augustan age, said of himself (*Carmina* 4.2.25-34. I give Wickham's prose translation):

Strong are the winds that upbear the swan of Dirce <Pindar> as oft as he soars into the cloudy spaces. For me, after the fashion of a Matine bee, that through incessant toil makes boot upon the fragrant thyme about the woods and river-banks of streaming Tibur, I humbly build my laborious verses.

From a study of Vergil, then (and of Horace), one might learn well the lesson set forth by the famous bore on the Appian Way (Horace, *Satires* 1.9.59-60) Nil sine magno vita labore dedit mortalibus, set forth so

beautifully, also, in the fine story of The Choice of Hercules, told by Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.1. 21 ff., and summed up tersely in the motto of a certain German-English Dictionary, 'Kein Preis ohne Fleiss'.

Another thing that impresses even the casual reader of Vergil is the fact that he possessed a deeply religious temperament. This is all the more striking because, as every one knows, there was in his day and generation a marked drift towards irreligion. One of Augustus's most cherished purposes as ruler of Rome was to bring about a religious revival. In vigorously supporting this, Vergil spoke from the heart and acted from deepest conviction¹.

It is interesting here to recall that Vergil was born in Gallia Cisalpina, and that two other Roman writers who were born in Gallia Cisalpina possessed a deeply religious temperament. I have in mind, of course, Livy and Pliny the Younger. In the case of these three men we can, perhaps, see the effect of environment. In one of his letters (1.14) Pliny writes to a certain Junius Mauricus, who had requested Pliny to find a husband for Mauricus's niece:

Patria est ei Brixia ex illa nostra Italia, quae multum adhuc verecundiae, frugalitatis, atque etiam rusticitatis antiquae retinet ac servat. . . . Habet aviam maternam Serranam Proculam e municipio Patavino. Nosti loci mores; Serrana tamen Patavinis quoque severitatis exemplum est.

We may remember that Martial (11.16. 7-8) is persuaded that even a *puella Patavina* may safely read his verses! Lest, however, we make too much of this point, the effect of environment on Vergil in matters of morals and religion, let us recall the life history of Catullus, also a native of Gallia Cisalpina.

The reference in the preceding paragraph to Vergil's birthplace recalls an interesting speculation—the possibility that certain Latin writers owed some of their characteristics to the fact that Celtic blood flowed in their veins. In the case of Vergil, the evidence in this respect has been examined afresh, in an article entitled *The Nationality of Vergil*, by G. E. K. Brauhnoltz, *The Classical Review* 29 (1915), 104-110. The author admits, in his summing up, that we

can arrive at no demonstrable conclusion. All we can say is that the preceding investigation suggests the probability that *Vergilius* and *Maro* are Etruscan or Etrusco-Latin, though the former may well be Celtic, whereas *Magia*² and *Silo*³ would appear to be probably Celtic, though a Latin (perhaps Etruscan) claim might also be allowed. The name of Vergil's birthplace, however, if that may be cited as evidence of his nationality, is certainly Celtic.

This hypothesis of a blend of Etruscan and Celtic blood is strongly supported by the poetry of Vergil. He was proud of the Etruscan origin of Mantua, and had intimate knowledge of Etruscan⁴ character

. . . . the Celtic traits in Vergil's poetry . . . are many. . . .

The points thus far presented must serve as specimens of the sort of thing one should keep in mind in repeated rereading of the entire body of Vergil's writings. One can, to be sure, find these matters elaborated in such standard works on Vergil as W. Y. Sellar, *The Roman Poets of the Augustan Age: Virgil*² (Oxford, 1883), and T. R. Glover, *Virgil*² (New York, 1912). But it is far better to find these things out through reading of the poet himself. What can be done in this way is illustrated by an excellent paper, entitled *Reflections On Re-reading Vergil*, by Dr. Emily Helen Dutton, published in the *Bulletin of Tennessee College, Murfreesboro, Tennessee*, Volume 9, No. 6 (March, 1916). I hope to present an abstract of this paper, with some comment on it, in a later number of *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY*⁵.

(b) Next, the teacher of Vergil should come to know Vergil through a study of the ancient *Vitae Vergilianae*. These lives are all short, they are all easy to read, they are highly entertaining, and they throw much light on our author's life, work, and character; in fact, most of what is said on these topics in editions of Vergil and in standard works on Vergil, like those named above, comes directly from the *Vitae Vergilianae*. These lives may be studied in the following works: *Ancient Lives of Vergil: An Essay on the Poems of Vergil in Connection with his Life and Times*, by H. Nettleship (Oxford, 1879); *Vitae Vergilianae*, by Jacob Brummer (a small volume in the Teubner Series, published at Leipzig, in 1912); *Die Vitae Vergilianae und ihre Antiken Quellen*, by E. Diehl (published at Bonn, in 1911, by Marcus and Weber). The latter two books are small and cheap, and, when the war in Europe is over, can no doubt be imported again without difficulty.

Some years ago, when I was trying to conduct a Summer Session class in Vergil, I found to my surprise and disquietude that very few, if any, members of the class had read a line of these ancient *Vitae Vergilianae*. That it might not be possible for anyone in the future to reproach them with this omission in their preparation for the teaching of Vergil, I set them to the task of going through certain sections of the Introduction of my edition of the *Aeneid*, especially 33-50, in connection with the *Vitae Vergilianae*, and of copying out for each of these sections whatever authority for its statements was to be found in the several *Vitae Vergilianae*.

In reading the *Vitae Vergilianae*, at least in the form in which they are given by Brummer's edition, one must remember that the material which has come down to us in these Lives is of two sorts. On the one hand, we have authentic information, going back to Suetonius, who died about 135 A. D., or rather, going back through Suetonius to earlier materials, some of which are con-

¹See my edition of the *Aeneid*, Introduction, §§ 66-68.

²The name of Vergil's mother.

³The name of a brother of Vergil.

⁴On this point see René Pichon, *Histoire de la Littérature Latine*, 328-329; Sellar, *Virgil*, 104-105; D. S. Slater, *The Poetry of Catullus*, 26-28.

⁵It surely is not necessary to elaborate the thought that of course the teacher of Vergil should gain a thorough mastery of the *contents* of all Vergil's writings.

temporaneous almost with Vergil himself. On the other hand, we have additions made at a much later time, largely apocryphal in character. Some of this latter material is immensely interesting. Let me paraphrase one passage (given in Brummer, 21-22):

'After Vergil had devoted himself most energetically to Greek and Latin literature both, he gave himself up finally with complete devotion to medicine and to mathematics. Having gained knowledge of the first order in these departments, he went to Rome. There he won the friendship of the keeper of the stables of Augustus, and cured the Emperor's horses of many diseases. By way of reward, Augustus ordered that a certain quantity of bread should be given day by day to Vergil, exactly as to the attendants in the stables. By and by the people of Crotona, in Southern Italy, sent as a present to Augustus a colt of wondrous beauty. Everyone else predicted that the colt would develop unexampled strength and speed. But Vergil, the moment he looked upon it, told the keeper of Augustus's stables that the mother of the colt had been diseased and that the colt would never have either strength or speed. When the keeper of Augustus's stables reported all this to Augustus, the Emperor gave orders that twice as much bread should be given daily to Vergil. When some dogs were sent from Spain as a gift to Augustus, Vergil described their parents exactly and foretold their future spirit and speed. Again Augustus ordered an increase in the amount of bread to be given to Vergil.

Now, Augustus was in doubt whether he was the son of his reputed father Octavius or of another. This doubt he thought Vergil could resolve, because Vergil had shown such accurate knowledge with respect to the colt and the dogs. Summoning Vergil to a private interview, he laid the matter before him. Vergil was loath to speak, lest he offend the Emperor. The Emperor assured him that he might speak in safety. So Vergil said at last: "In the case of all other animals it is easy enough, with the help of mathematics and philosophy, to determine the characteristics of their parents. But in the case of man, this cannot be done. In your case, however, I can make a plausible guess concerning the trade plied by your father" <that is, said Vergil, I can not tell you *who* your father was, but I can tell you *what* he was>. "Speak out", said Augustus. "Your father", said Vergil, "was a baker. This I infer because every time I have made to you a statement of facts which could be discovered only *ab eruditissimis summisque viris*, you, the *princeps orbis*, ordered bread to be given to me by way of reward. This was the act of a baker or of the son of a baker". "Hereafter", cried Augustus, "you will be rewarded not by a baker, but *ab rege magnanimo*".

Caesar liked Vergil's pleasantry, came to esteem him highly, and commended him to Pollio'.

Such a story as this is but a small part of a great body of apocryphal material which in the course of ages grew up about Vergil. Here is a fascinating theme of study for the teacher of Vergil. Such study will help him gain a juster idea of the immense part which Vergil has played in the history of the intellectual life of mankind. This material has been gathered together exhaustively in certain books, e. g. one by Domenico Comparetti, *Vergil in the Middle Ages* (translated by E. F. M. Benecke: New York, Macmillan Company, 1895); and J. F. Tunison, *Master Vergil: the Author of the*

Aeneid as He Seemed in the Middle Ages (Cincinnati, 1890). It is well summarized, with important additions, by Professor K. F. Smith, *The Later Tradition of Vergil*, *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 9.178-182, 185-188.

On one other characteristic of Vergil which is brought out in the *Vitae Vergilianae* I wish to dwell for a moment or two. In Suetonius's *Life of Vergil*, § 11, we find the following words: . . . constat ut . . . si quando Romae, quo rarissime comaeat, viseretur in publico, sectantes demonstrantesque se subterfugeret in primum tectum. This means that, on his rare visits to Rome, persons, seeing him in the streets, thronged about him and pointed him out to one another; by this Vergil was so deeply embarrassed that he fled to the nearest house⁶. To me this brief statement is full of interest for the light it throws on Vergil's nature, and particularly because, viewing the passage in this light, I connect it with a problem that I have more than once set for graduate students in a Classical Proseminar: How did the *Aeneid* begin? Now, we learn in the Suetonian *Life of Vergil*, as well as in the Commentary written by the Roman scholar Servius, in the fourth century A.D., on the *Aeneid*, that in the manuscript of the *Aeneid* as Vergil left it at his death four verses appeared before the familiar *Arma virumque cano*, etc.

These verses are as follows:

Ille ego, qui quondam gracili modulatus avena
carmen; et egressus silvis vicina coegi
ut quamvis avido parent arva colonos,
gratum opus agricolis; at nunc horrentia Martis

'He am I who in other days tuned my song on a slender reed, and then, leaving the woods, constrained the tilled lands near-by to obey the husbandman, however grasping, a work that pleased the farmers; but now of Mars' bristling. . .

Suetonius and Servius tell us that after Vergil's death these verses were removed, with permission of Augustus, by Vergil's literary executors, Lucius Varius Rufus and Plotius Tucca. To determine whether Vergil wrote these four verses is a pretty problem, in the solution of which we consider external and internal evidence both, we examine passages in many post-Vergilian Latin authors and we look at inscriptions for references to the *Aeneid*, and, besides, ponder questions of psychology and aesthetics. If we conclude that Vergil wrote the four verses, we must ask, Who had the better taste, Vergil or his literary executors? Again, what of the psychology of the matter? Is it natural that a man who dodged into the nearest doorway to escape the approving notice of passersby should sound the personal

⁶Horace, on the contrary, enjoyed his fame. In *Carmina* 4.3, addressing the Muse Melpomene, he says (21-23): totum munus hoc tui est, quod monstror digito praetereuntium Romanae fidicen lyrae. 'It is wholly of thy grace that I am pointed out by the finger of the passers by as the minstrel of the Roman lyre'. It will be remembered that, in *Carmina* 3.30, Horace, imitating Ennius, gives expression to his literary self-consciousness. Demosthenes, the famous Greek orator, was, we know, highly elated when he heard a poor woman say of him in the street, 'That's he'. The satirist Persius, however (1.28), makes fun of a man who thinks it a fine thing *digito monstrari et dicier "Hic est"*, 'for men to point him out and say, "There he goes"'. Compare also Juvenal 1.161.

note so strongly at the beginning of his greatest work? I leave it to the professional psychologist to answer this question in the abstract. Looking at the problem concretely, I notice several things. In the first place, if we assume that the poem commenced with *Arma virumque cano* instead of with *Ille ego*, etc., we see that even then the personal note is struck in the very first line. The poet sets forth as a personal effort the development of the great theme of his great work, as outlined in verses 1-7. It is not until verse 8 that he appeals to the Muse for help. All this is in sharpest contrast with the opening verses of the *Iliad*, the opening verses of the *Odyssey*, and even with the opening lines of *Evangeline*, in which the poet declares that the song he is to sing is the song he heard from the murmuring pines and the hemlocks.

Compare next Eclogues 5.85-87. There one of the singers makes a present to another in the following words:

Hac te nos fragili donabimus ante cicuta.
Haec nos "Formosum Corydon ardebat Alexim",
haec eadem docuit "Cuium pecus? An Meliboei?".
"This frail reed < = pipe > I will give you first. This pipe taught me, "For the lovely Alexis Corydon was aflame", this same pipe taught me, "Whose flock? Meliboeus's?".

Here we have two references by Vergil himself to earlier writings of Vergil, Eclogue 2 and Eclogue 3.

Lastly, let us note the closing lines of the *Georgics*, 4.559-566:

Haec super arborum cultu pecorumque canebam
et super arboribus, Caesar dum magnus ad altum
fulminat Euphraten bello victorque volentis
per populos dat iura viamque adfectat Olympo.
Illo Vergilium me tempore dulcis aiebat
Parthenope, studiis florentem ignobilis oti,
carmina qui lusi pastorum audaxque iuventa,
Tityre, te patulae cecini sub tegmine fagi⁷.

"This I sang of the tillage of the fields, of the care of cattle, and of trees, while Caesar the great thundered in war by the deep Euphrates, and gave a victor's laws to willing nations, and sought to fashion a highway for himself to heaven. In those days I, Vergil, was nurtured by sweet Parthenope, and found joy in the ways of inglorious ease, I dallied with the songs of shepherds, and, with the daring of youth, sang of you, Tityrus, 'neath the covert of the wide-spreading beech-tree'.

(c) Let us come back now to our first point—the study of Vergil in and through his own writings. One most excellent way to do this is to read Vergil aloud. As has been well said, the ancients read with their ears and not with their eyes. Works were very frequently read to them: compare e. g. Nepos, *Life of Atticus* 13.3; Pliny, *Epistles* 3.5.12. Authors, too, dictated their works to amanuenses.

The theory of the dactylic hexameter is easy enough to understand. It is set forth in detail in Latin Grammars and in more detail in every annotated edition of the *Aeneid*. To read the hexameter aloud, metrically, is likewise no great task, at least for one who has an ear

for rhythm and music. All that is necessary is practice. It might be worth while for every teacher to mark out for himself the scansion of a book or two of the *Aeneid*, and, as he does this, to make a collection of verses in which elision is either wholly wanting or is not markedly present. Such verses are easy to read. The teacher could then read aloud again and again these verses by way of practice; indeed, he might well commit some of them to memory. In this connection I beg to suggest that it is worth while to read Lucan's *Pharsalia* aloud, in large quantities, because elision is relatively infrequent in Lucan's verses. Again, every teacher of Vergil should not only read aloud Vergil himself in vast quantities, but he should read aloud specimens of all the dactylic hexameters in Latin in their chronological sequence—namely, verses of Ennius, Lucretius, Catullus, Vergil's Eclogues, Horace's Satires, Vergil's *Georgics*, Vergil's *Aeneid*, Horace's *Epistles*, Ovid, Lucan, etc. If he does this, he will understand better than in any other way certain things. He will understand, first, that Vergil is as supreme in the field of Latin verse as Cicero is in the field of Latin prose. In the second place, he will understand why, after all, the world rates Lucretius, that marvelous Roman poet-scientist, below Vergil. There are single passages in Lucretius that for sheer beauty and imaginative power are equal to anything in Vergil, if not superior to anything in Vergil. Yet, after all, in the sphere of *form* Lucretius commonly falls far short of the heights reached by Vergil. Since the critic (of poetry, especially) cannot separate form from contents, the world is right in rating Vergil above Lucretius⁸.

The reading aloud of Vergil helps markedly to an understanding of various other things a knowledge of which is essential to the right teaching of Vergil. I am thinking now of the use of meter as an aid to rhetoric, to securing the desired logical effect, or, in other words, of the use of meter as a means of bringing out the meaning. For example, let us read aloud part of Juno's impassioned speech at the beginning of *Aeneid* I, especially the following verses (1.39-48):

Pallasne exurere classem
Argivum atque ipsos potuit submergere ponto
unius ob noxam et furias Aiacei Oilei?
Ipsa Iovis rapidum iaculata e nubibus ignem
disiecitque rates evertitque aequora ventis,
illum expirantem transfixo pectore flammam
turbine corripuit scopuloque infixit acuto;
ast ego, quae divum incedo regina Iovisque
et soror et coniunx, una cum gente tot annos
bella gero.

In reading these verses we shall be struck by the fact that in 47 the small word *et* twice carries the metrical accent, the ictus. Now, it has been said that Vergil erred in putting the metrical weight "on so small and so insignificant a word". Over against this is, however,

⁸Certain details ought to be considered here, as necessary to a full statement of this subject. I do not go into them, however, because I discussed them in *THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY* 10.81-82, 89-90, 97-98.

⁷Here we have a reference to Eclogue 1.

the antecedent probability that Vergil knew his business as a writer of Latin verses. Secondly, it takes no very careful examination of 47 to discover that, in putting the double metrical emphasis on *et*, Vergil was in fact logically and rhetorically doing the right thing. When Juno contrasted her own impotency to punish the Trojans with the swift and complete vengeance that Athena had exacted of a whole company of Greeks, because of the sin and mad folly of a single man, it was precisely the duality of her relation to Jupiter that constituted the bitterest drop in her bitter cup. Athena was only a daughter of Jupiter, Juno was Jupiter's 'both sister and wife'; Athena had speedy and complete vengeance, whereas Juno was waging war fruitlessly for so many years with a single people.

Conversely, by reading aloud, one discovers that many words which are rhetorically and logically important carry no metrical emphasis. One or two examples must suffice. In Aeneid 1.77-78 *tuus* and *mihi* are the words that, in prose at least, we should stress most of all, since they are the most important logically and rhetorically; yet neither carries metrical weight. We may make the same statement about *illi* and *mihi* in Aeneid 1.138-139.

Reading aloud is most instructive in another connection, in the light it throws on the metrical treatment of repeated words. If we would gain the full effect of such a passage as Aeneid 2.116-119

Sanguine placastis ventos et virgine caesa,
cum primum Iliacas, Danaï, venistis ad oras:
sanguine quaerendi reditus animaeque litandum
Argolica,

we must reinforce eye by ear. The same is true of Aeneid 1.421-422 (note *miratur . . . miratur*), of 1.222 (note *fortem . . . fortem*), of 3.435-438 (note *unum . . . unum . . . Iunonis . . . Iunoni*), of 3.623-627 (note *vidi . . . vidi*). As one reads aloud 3.521-524

Iamque rubescebat stellis Aurora fugatis,
cum procul obscuros collis humilemque videmus
Italiam. *Italiam* primus conclamat Achates,
Italiam laeto socii clamore salutant,

he can hear ringing through all the centuries the glorious happy cry of the Trojans as they caught sight at last, after their weary wanderings, of the promised land, *Italia . . . Italia . . . Italia*, and one recalls instantly the equally glorious, happy cry of the ten thousand Greeks, 'The sea! The sea!', when at last they had fought and marched their way through the mountains till they saw once more the beloved sea. C. K.

(To be concluded)

REVIEW

Latin Plays. For Student Performances and Reading.

By John J. Schlicher. Boston: Ginn and Company (1916). Pp. vii + 213. 75 cts.

Like Cothurnulus and Decem Fabulae, Mr. Schlicher's volume, Latin Plays, provides unassuming dramatic

entertainment for the edification of students of preparatory Latin. Whether these plays are read in the classroom or acted in the assembly hall, the object is two-fold—to make Latin a 'living' language and to interest boys and girls of to-day in the life of the ancient Romans. The plays are seven in number. The first, Saccus Malorum, The Sack of Apples, is especially adapted to the second half of the first year of Latin; Tirones, The Recruits, and Exitus Helvetiorum, The Departure of the Helvetians, are intended for readers of Caesar; Cicero Candidatus, When Cicero was Candidate, and Coniuratio, The Conspiracy, deal, of course, with events in Cicero's life; Dido, based upon the first book of the Aeneid, and Andromeda, of Ovidian origin, are to be assigned to the fourth year classes.

All the plays are of about the same length, i. e. from twenty to twenty-five pages. The time required for acting would be about thirty or forty minutes, a most convenient length: two or three of these pocket-dramas, with perhaps brief musical interludes, could easily be given together; it might even be possible to combine in a single program four plays, one performed by each of the four classes, provided the scenic decorations were simple and the 'tempo' of the acting not allowed to drag.

The plots are, naturally enough, neither greatly complicated nor strikingly original. The necessity of keeping the language exceedingly simple and the desirability of correlating the subject-matter with the regular class work has precluded such ideals. Perhaps the two plays on Cicero are the most successful; those on Caesar seem the least happy. The Andromeda is the most melodramatic; the Exitus Helvetiorum and Cicero Candidatus the least so, since they are devoted, in large measure, to the portrayal of different classes of the common people—soldiers, Helvetian women, shepherds, reapers, house-slaves, and the like. Some pains have evidently been taken to depict individual characters, but the limitations imposed by language, shortness of time, and the youth of the actors permit only conventional outlinings. The action, though far from subtle, is often vigorous and vivid; the 'curtains' are almost always excellently devised. Wisely Mr. Schlicher has made the effort to show by his stage directions just what effects he desires, and just how to obtain them. For example, here is one bit of action from the Saccus Malorum (page 10):

The boys start away with their poles, etc., one carrying the sack on his shoulder, and each of them eating an apple. Tranio stands in the door for a while and looks after them. Then he counts his money over again. Finally, in a pleased tone, he speaks to himself.

In fact, the stage directions throughout are admirable and a veritable god-send to any teacher-coach who may not be naturally endowed with histrionic instincts. In his endeavor, however, to be realistic, Mr. Schlicher, in these directions, once in a while becomes unnecessarily colloquial: a Helvetian woman is "tidying up"